

## **Annual Operating Instructions**

### **BUSH CREEK ALLOTMENT Alpine Ranger District Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest**

#### **2019 grazing season**

#### **Term Permitted Livestock Numbers and dates:**

Bush Creek Allotment	11 to 27 AUMs	11/01 to 4/30
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#### **Annual Validation livestock numbers and dates:**

Bush Creek Allotment	4 C/C	03/01/2019 to 04/15/2019
		10/15/2019 to 2/28/2020

#### **1. Pasture Schedule**

I have approved your application to graze 4 Cow/Calf pairs on the Bush Creek Allotment. The table below represents your grazing rotation schedule for 2019 grazing season.

<b>Allotment</b>	<b>Pasture</b>	<b>On</b>	<b>Off</b>	<b>Number/Class</b>
Bush Creek	Bush Creek	03/01/19	3/30/19	4 C/C
	Bush Creek	10/15/19	11/23/19	4 C/C
	Mountain	11/24/19	2/29/20	4 C/C
	Steeple	Rest		

\*Dates will be adjusted if allowable use guidelines in the stocked pastures are reached sooner than anticipated.

\*\*Bogr=blue grama and Bocu=sideoats grama. Key species may be adjusted as necessary to reflect those receiving the most grazing pressure based on time of the year.

The schedule above may be modified at any time during the grazing season if the utilization levels, identified below, are met, if water availability is inadequate, or for other resource management reasons. If allowable use levels are met early in the scheduled pasture, horses will be rotated into the next pasture or off the Forest. If you are scheduled to rotate livestock to the next pasture, but feel there is adequate forage to sustain them in the current pasture and would prefer to hold off on the rotation, please contact Range Personnel, for an inspection and approval. No re-grazing of any pasture will be allowed. Horses are to be completely removed from a pasture by the off date. Please notify this office when you begin to move horses, and when a pasture rotation is complete.

#### **2. Utilization Standards**

The following utilization standards will be applied on the Bush Creek Allotments. A management guideline of conservative use of 30-40% in the uplands as measured at the end of the grazing season will be employed to improve vegetative and soil conditions.

Our priority will be to maintain satisfactory vegetative and watershed conditions. Horses' distribution and subsequent utilization levels will help determine management.

### **3. Key Area Monitoring**

Utilization levels will be checked prior to livestock entering the allotment and near the midpoint, of the grazing period for each pasture at key areas. A Key Area is defined as:

*“a portion of range, which because of its location, grazing or browsing value, and/or use, serves as an indicative sample of range conditions, trend, or degree of use seasonally. A key area guides the general area of which it is part.”* (Forest Service Region 3 Rangeland and Analysis Management Guide, June, 1997).

Utilization measurements will be taken on key livestock forage plants (key species). Key Forage Species is defined as:

*“1. Forage species (plants) whose use serves as an indicator to the degree of use of associated species. In many cases, key species include indicator species and species traditionally referenced as increasers, decreasers, desirables, or intermediates. 2. Those species (plants) which must, because of their importance, be considered in the management program.”* (Forest Service Region 3 Rangeland and Analysis Management Guide, June 1997).

- Riparian areas will be monitored for use on riparian woody species' current year's leaders, as well as percentage of use, by weight on riparian grasses.
- Upland areas will be monitored for use on perennial grass species.
- Mexican Spotted Owl protected and restricted habitat will be monitored to ensure that current management is providing cover for rodent prey species, the residual biomass that will support prescribed natural and ignited fires that would reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the Forest, and regeneration of riparian trees and shrubs.

District personnel will contact the Permittee to coordinate site visits to monitor key areas, when practical. Permittee participation is encouraged. Forage utilization estimates will be consistent with the Forest Service Range Analysis Handbook methodology, and may also include FS Regional stubble-height standards, as well as other techniques generally accepted in the field of range management.

### **4. Range Improvements**

Range improvements must be maintained to standard before cattle are allowed into a pasture. It is the permittee's responsibility to ensure that range improvements remains functional. This includes boundary fences in pastures not currently being grazed. Fences must remain in a state that prevents the passage of cattle. Routine maintenance of existing improvements does not require written clearance; however, construction/reconstruction of improvements must be authorized in writing from this office.

### **5. Special Management Practices**

The following restrictions will be implemented so that management remains in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. The instructions below relate to threatened, endangered, and proposed to be listed species, as well as range/watershed conditions.

- No salt or mineral block may be placed in protected and restricted Mexican spotted owl habitat from March 1 to August 31, and no concentrations of livestock (i.e., corral use, traps, or large gatherings of livestock) and will be strategically placed to help distribute

livestock away from water sources, improvements, riparian areas, high use recreation sites and trails, and roads.

- Actual placement will be at least ¼ mile from riparian areas or live water, unless otherwise approved by the Forest Officer in charge. Supplements are a tool to enhance overall livestock distribution and utilization patterns.
- Stock tanks must be surveyed for possible aquatic habitat before earth-disturbing maintenance is authorized.
- A small portion of Steeple Pasture is within designated Mexican Spotted Owl critical habit. To prevent livestock from having direct effects to riparian vegetation development and allow for prey base habitat development, livestock will not have access to riparian habitat.
- Drafting out of open water sources for the purpose of hauling water for livestock will require the sterilization of hoses, foot-valves, hip-boots, and other equipment to prevent the spread of chytrid fungus. Please consult the Alpine Wildlife Staff for specific details in this matter.

#### 6. **Other Instructions**

The permittee must obtain permission from the District Ranger, before conducting earth-disturbing activities on the National Forest. The Forest Service will arrange inspections of project areas and will prepare appropriate environmental and cultural documents before earth-disturbing activities proceed. These activities include road/earthen tank maintenance, as well as construction/reconstruction of trails, roads, earthen tanks, etc. Do not conduct any earth-disturbing activities on the Forest without written clearance from this office.

Salt must be located at least ¼ mile from water, and preferably on ridges and/or areas of low use. Do not place salt blocks in the same location as the previous year, and locate blocks on hard ground not susceptible to erosion. Supplemental feeding, other than mineral or supplement block is not authorized on the National Forest.

The Annual Operating Instructions are a part of the Term Grazing Permit as provided for in Part 1, Section 3, and comply with the standards and guidelines found in the Forest Plan. They also comply with the Endangered Species Act found in the Biological Assessment for Bush Creek Allotments. Any additional information collected during the year may be incorporated into the Annual Operating Instructions.

We appreciate your cooperation in the management of the Bush Creek Allotment. If you have any questions regarding these instructions, please contact the Alpine District Range Staff or myself at (928) 339-5000. Thank you.